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Item 3 (c) of the provisional agenda*
Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century": implementation of strategic objectives and action in the critical areas of concern and further actions and initiatives

Statement submitted by Armenian International Women's Association, International Alliance of Women, International Association of Women in Radio and Television, International Federation of Business and Professional Women, International Federation of Settlements and Neighbourhood Centres, Soroptimist International, Trickle up Program, United Nations Association of the United States of America, United States Committee for UNIFEM and Zonta International, non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of 25 July 1996.

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Statement

We, the undersigned international and national non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council, all members of the NGO Committee on UNIFEM, direct your attention to the outstanding leadership of the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) with regard to both themes of the 50th session of the Commission on the Status of Women.

In the area "Enhanced participation of women in development: an enabling environment for achieving gender equality and the advancement of women…", UNIFEM has worked diligently to fulfil its mandate to serve as a catalyst for ensuring the appropriate involvement of women in mainstream development activities, often at the pre-investment stage.

Its recent publication, *Progress of the World's Women 2005*, advocates that strengthening women's economic security is vital to the reduction of poverty and the promotion of gender equality. Decent work is basic to achieving economic security. The report provides data that:

1. the proportion of women workers engaged in informal employment is generally greater than the proportion of men workers;
2. women are concentrated in the more precarious types of informal employment;
3. the average earnings from these types of employment are too low, in the absence of other sources of income, to raise households out of poverty;
4. workers in the informal economy frequently lack human rights and social inclusion, as compared to those in the formal economy.

The study provides models of what can and should be done to help the working poor, especially women, minimize the costs and maximize the benefits of their work. The report also suggests the necessity of advocacy to stop the generation of informal, insecure and badly paid employment by expanding formal employment opportunities as well as taking action to increase social protection and representative voice for the working poor, especially women.

UNIFEM projects, such as their efforts, in Central and Eastern Europe and the CIS States, emphasize women's and girl's land and property rights that have aided rural women to secure and widen their economic opportunity. Two of UNIFEM's strategic focus areas — ending violence against women and reversing the spread of HIV/AIDS among women and girls — address the "enhanced participation of women in development" through education and health initiatives. The UNIFEM Trust Fund in Support of Actions to Eliminate Violence against Women, which funds innovative projects, primarily at the national and local levels, has awarded to date $8.3 million in grants to 175 initiatives in 96 countries to educate women and enhance their capacities to combat violence.

Gender-based violence is one of the leading factors in HIV infection. Through the Trust Fund, UNIFEM and UNAIDS have created a partnership with Johnson and Johnson, a global manufacturer and provider of healthcare products and services, to reduce women's vulnerability to HIV and improve their access to HIV and AIDS services. Such public/private partnerships are a promising step in offering additional resources in creating an enabling environment for the advancement of women.

UNIFEM's strategic goal that focuses on achieving gender equality in democratic governance in times of peace as well as war, promotes the second theme of this year's CSW — the equal participation of women and men in decision-making at all levels. UNIFEM's programs have been especially effective in promoting the presence of women in post-conflict situations where new constitutions and new governing bodies have been created such as Rwanda, Timor-Leste, Afghanistan and Iraq. The fostering of women's rights and participation, with an emphasis on strengthening mechanisms, such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women that protect and promote these rights, is contributing immensely to worldwide efforts to accept women as equal partners in decision-making.

The NGO Committee wholeheartedly endorses UNIFEM's important work and urges increased financial support, including for the Trust Fund, from Member States and private funders. We need UNIFEM's vigorous leadership in the promotion of women's human rights, the empowerment of women and gender equality.